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Federal jury awards $10M to former Novant Health employee in discrimination case

The plaintiff claimed that he and other "white male leaders were dismissed from employment without warning and replaced by women and/or minorities," court documents state.

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A federal jury awarded $10 million against Novant Health in a discrimination case. (WBTV File)

By Brad Dickerson

*This article has **433 words** with a read time of approximately **2 minutes and 9 seconds.***

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (WBTV) – A federal jury awarded a former Novant Health executive $10 million in damages after he claimed in a lawsuit that he was fired because he's a white man.

Attorneys for David Duvall filed the lawsuit in November 2019.

According to court documents, Duvall was dismissed from the North Carolina-based health system, where he served as senior vice president of marketing and communications, on July 30, 2018.

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The plaintiff claimed that he and other "white male leaders were dismissed from employment without warning and replaced by women and/or minorities," court documents state.

Duvall said he was terminated six days before his fifth work anniversary, avoiding a claim for 18 months' severance promised him when he was hired.

He claimed in the suit that his firing stemmed from a 2015 commitment Novant Health signed onto, along with other health systems nationwide, to address health care inequities.

"That goal spurred a new commitment to a moribund diversity and inclusion ("D&I") effort – an initiative at Novant Health that by 2018 had turned into avowed 'strategic imperative' to use racial and gender targets to reshape Novant Health's workforce and leadership to reflect the community it served," the plaintiff's revised trial brief stated.

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The federal jury in Charlotte came back with its verdict on Tuesday.

On the verdict form, the panel checked "yes" to the question "Has Plaintiff David Duvall proven that his race (Caucasian) and/or his sex (male) was a motivating factor in Novant Health's decision to terminate him?"

For the second question, which asked "Has Novant Health proven that it would have made the same decision to terminate David Duvall regardless of his race (Caucasian) and/or his sex (male)?" the jury checked "No," according to the verdict form.

In response to the final question asking the amount of punitive damages that should be awarded against Novant Health," the jury awarded $10 million.

A Novant Health spokesperson sent the following statement to WBTV:

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We are extremely disappointed with the verdict as we believe it is not supported by the evidence presented at trial, which includes our reason for Mr. Duvall's termination. We will pursue all legal options, including appeal, over the next several weeks and months.

Novant Health is one of thousands of organizations to put in place robust diversity and inclusion programs, which we believe can co-exist alongside strong non-discriminatory policies that extend to all races and genders, including white men. It's important for all current and future team members to know that this verdict will not change Novant Health's steadfast commitment to diversity, inclusion and equity for all.

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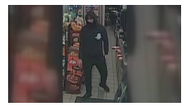
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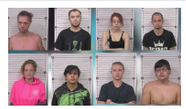
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